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ALTA AVALANCHE STUDY CENTER

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A TABULATION OF SNOW AVALANCHE

FATALITIES IN COLORADO

R. M. Stillman
Avalanche Hazard Forecaster
Arapaho National Forest

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During each winter in Colorado, usually considered to be from November 15 to May 1, hundreds of snow avalanches take place. Most of these are not observed nor do they cause damage. Several dozen fall in such a manner that they can be considered "close calls." Damage is done to man's installations, or man himself is involved but not injured seriously. Many of this type go unreported, known only to the person who was directly involved.

Most all snow avalanches that cause death and large amounts of destruction are on record, usually in a newspaper's morgue room.

Using the data available at the Denver Post and more recent data of the Forest Service, the following is a tabulation of avalanche fatalities which have occurred in Colorado.

The writer has a feeling that this tabulation is not complete, especially from 1883 to 1950. This lack of completeness may be due to lack of reporting facilities and press of other business at a particular accident time. It is believed that records from 1950-51 to present are complete.

Notice that during the winter of 1905-06 113+ persons were killed. Apparently the winter was so severe and avalanche activity so great that an accurate count was not possible.

The tabulation has been segregated into winters. Following each winter is a total number of fatalities and following this number the class of person has been listed.

This listing suggests that avalanches took a heavy toll of persons who were classed as miners. These occurred in the heyday of mining activity. In more

recent times the class of people is more diversified, such as skiers, highway users, construction workers.

No doubt there are more people in the mountains during the winter today than in the mining days and the sharp reduction in fatal deaths may be due to a combination of factors. Some of these factors are: the miners usually lived in among the avalanche paths, whereas, today, this is not generally done; the publication of material which outlines some of the reasons for avalanches; training sessions conducted by the Forest Service and other groups who work or play in the mountains; introduction and use of known ways of control of the avalanche and issuance of avalanche danger warning during times of high hazard.

Winter of 1883-84	13 (Miners)
Winter of 1884-85	10 (Miners)
Winter of 1898-99	14 (Miners)
Winter of 1901-02	17 (Miners)
Winter of 1905-06	113+ (Miners)
Winter of 1908-09	4 (Miners)
Winter of 1932-33	1 (Miner)
Winter of 1935-36	3 (Miners)
Winter of 1947-48	4 (2 Skiers, 1 highway user and 1 highway worker)
Winter of 1950-51	4 (Highway Users)
Winter of 1956-57	3 (2 Skiers, 1 highway worker)
Winter of 1957-58	4 (Highway users)

Winter of 1959-60	1 (Skier)
Winter of 1960-61	2 (Skiers)
Winter of 1961-62	8 (1 Skier, 7 townspeople)
Winter of 1962-63	3 (Highway Users)
Winter of 1964-65	<u>2</u> (Construction Workers)
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